

Rice Report

FEBRUARY 2009 E-NEWS



"Shovel Ready"

County Executive Scott Walker's recent [State of the County Address](#) contained a number of specific plans to spur economic development and job creation. He illustrated his "Blueprint for Economic Prosperity" by standing with 19 shovels representing his interest in working with members of the County Board to build a better community.



County Executive Walker presenting his Blueprint for Economic Prosperity at Bucyrus International, Inc. in South Milwaukee.

The plan he unveiled included:

- Moving the County's Mental Health Complex to the former St. Michael's Hospital site and selling the existing site for development at the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center.
- Approval of the request by UW-Milwaukee for the sale of land to construct a new School of Engineering.
- Breaking loose the logjam in Park East corridor development by selling the land to the City of Milwaukee.
- Submitting an application to the Federal Aviation Administration to allow Milwaukee County the option of leasing the airport to a private entity.

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“Shovel Ready” - continued

I expressed to the County Executive my support for enacting these plans, as I believe they will lead to real job growth and more effective and efficient county government.

Appropriate oversight of these plans is a legitimate part of the legislative process. However, an “analysis paralysis” has slowed the consideration of these proposals to a snail’s pace. I support moving aggressively to enact these elements of the Blueprint for Prosperity and will continue to oppose further efforts to delays.

I look forward to the challenge before us and the opportunities to improve our economy. As always, I welcome your ideas.

County Ethics Education Must Be a Priority

The newly revised and enhanced Milwaukee County Ethics Code, a product of the Milwaukee County Ethics Code Study Committee which I had a privilege to chair, recommended a robust ethics education component.

Training all those covered by the Code would have a significant impact on reducing the frequency and severity of ethics-related violations. It is clear that now more than ever there exists the need for implementing extensive ethics education for county officials.

[News coverage](#) regarding the use of travel funds serves as a strong reminder of the need to have an extensive education effort with respect to governmental ethics.

Expense Account Posted Online

In light of the recent attention to Milwaukee County Supervisors’ expense account funds, I have decided to post each monthly [expense account statement](#) on my county website. These monthly statements will provide you with ready access to how I am using these funds.

Traditionally, each year my office has returned a significant portion of the Individual Office Account funds allocated for expenses.

Please feel free to [contact me](#) should you have any questions.



Presentation on Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Corridor Transit Options

As the debate about regional transit options unfolds, it is important to carefully weigh all viable options and provide a diversity of opinions in order to make an informed decision on the matter.

In that spirit, on January 16 I hosted a presentation by Mr. Thomas Rubin, a national expert on transit operations and funding. His [study](#) of transit options for the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) corridor provides an independent analysis of the costs and effectiveness of public transportation options under consideration for the KRM corridor.



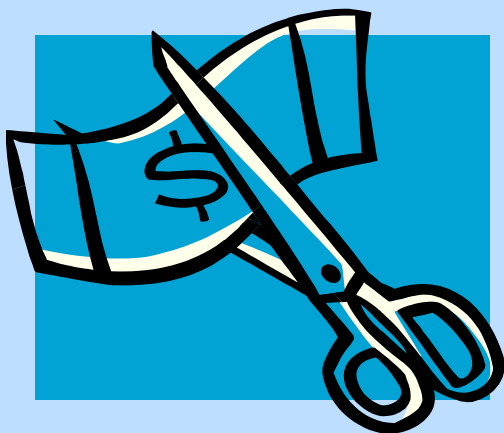
The main finding of the study was that, "the claimed economic benefits of the proposed commuter rail line for the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee corridor are 'not credible' and other transit options should be studied."

Mr. Rubin's research unveiled significant questions regarding projected ridership levels, as well as construction and operation taxpayer subsidies required for the project. He suggested that a cost benefit analysis favors other options – such as Bus Rapid Transit.

What do you think? [E-mail](#) me with your views.

Economic Stimulus Funds

Recently, Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker expressed caution regarding acceptance of federal funds from the current administration's Federal Stimulus Package. I share concern over the "strings" attached to these funds. We need the freedom to make informed choices, including the freedom to say, "thanks, but no thanks."



Although many details of the 1,200-page bill are still unclear, many stimulus-funded projects may require local tax dollar matches and force the county to pick up costs in future years when federal dollars disappear.

Instead of massive new government spending, the current administration should be stimulating the economy by putting the money in the hands of the people by enacting further tax cuts – a policy proven to be effective in the past.

Air Tran Expands Operations by More Than 40%

It is truly good news to hear that despite the current economic hardship, AirTran Airways plans to expand its Milwaukee operations by 43%.

The expansion includes additional routes to existing destinations, as well as new routes to Branson, Denver, Minneapolis, and Saint Louis.



This expansion will have a positive effect for passengers by creating additional competition between the airlines – thus potentially lowering fares.

In addition to this, AirTran intends to hire thirty additional workers for its expanded Milwaukee operations.

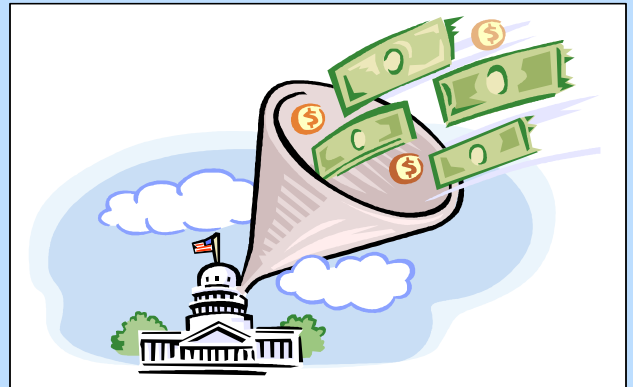
I join the local business community in celebrating this decision by AirTran.

Holding the Line On New Taxes

During the last two Milwaukee County Board Meetings I voted against seeking approval of a new 1% Milwaukee County Sales Tax.

Raising taxes during an economic downturn is bad public policy and has the exact opposite effect of economic stimulus.

Instead of looking to increase tax burdens, the county must recommit to spending existing tax revenues more efficiently though eliminating fraud and abuse, and finding cost effective solutions such as privatization.



Rice Appointed to the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center Board of Directors

I was recently appointed to serve on the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center Board of Directors.

From its humble beginnings as the County hospital, over the span of last forty years the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center (MRMC) has grown into a state of the art medical service and research facility that sees over one million patients annually and employs over 15,000 individuals. Its direct and indirect regional economic impact has been estimated to exceed \$2.4 billion.

I welcome this opportunity to represent Milwaukee County's interest on this board. MRMC is already one of the largest job centers in the county and deserves attention and support to spur additional economic development and job growth.

Senior Citizen Hall of Fame

Milwaukee County and the Commission on Aging have announced the 12th Annual Senior Citizen Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame honors older adults in Milwaukee County who have made significant volunteer contributions to the community.

This is a great way to recognize senior citizens in your community who have made a difference. If you have someone that you would like to honor for his or her special commitment to the community, this is a wonderful opportunity to do just that!

There will be up to five senior citizens chosen throughout the County for the 2009 Hall of Fame. The nominees will be chosen no later than April 6th, and in order to be eligible you must have your nominations post-marked by March 13, 2009.

For more information check out the official Milwaukee County Senior Hall of Fame [website](#).

Events at Milwaukee County Parks

Winter Golf – Can't wait to get back out on the golf course? Golf now at selected Milwaukee County Parks Golf Courses. Winter golf is available on selected golf courses, weather permitting, and always available at the [Golf Dome](#).

Mitchell Park Domes - Experience a desert oasis, a tropical jungle and special floral gardens...all in one afternoon...and an amazing lighting display in the evening!

Newly remodeled Domes (524 S. Layton Boulevard) are open Mon.-Wed. from 9-5pm, Thur. 9-9pm and Fri.-Sun 9-7pm. Adult admission is \$5.50, children ages 6-17 are \$4.00 and children 5 and under may enter for free.

Music Under the Glass – The Mitchell Park Domes, invites the public to attend a series of live music concerts, "[Music Under the Glass](#)," held in the Show Dome every Thursday evening from 6:30 to 8:30pm through March 26th. An added bonus to the evening concert will include two high-tech light shows scheduled for 5:30pm and 8:30pm.

Lego Land - The Mitchell Park Domes is hosting an indoor Train Show, titled, "[LEGOLAND](#)." It will include several G-scale trains running simultaneously on over 500 ft. of track through a landscape of "LEGOS" in the Show Dome. The show runs through March 22nd.

[Click here](#) for additional details about events at Milwaukee County Parks.

